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ABSTRACT

This document presents the results of an attitudinal study using 635 black students at the University of Maryland. Results indicate that blacks strongly feel that the University should provide a telephone crisis service, a drug counseling service, contraceptive and abortion information, Student Advisory Boards, and a legal counseling service. They also feel that the University should recruit more black students, that they do not have ample authority to participate in policymaking, and proper channels are not available to express complaints. In addition, black students feel that faculty advisors and teaching faculty care more about students than do administrators. Blacks attend the University because it is conveniently located or because it offers the type of program desired. Only 5% indicated the high school counselor as a factor in college choice. It is suggested that more black students on campus is a partial but necessary step toward making the campus a more comfortable place for blacks. (Author/HS)

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Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

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William E. Sedlacek, Glenwood C. Brooks, Jr.
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Research Report # 8-71*

* Revised March, 1972

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SUMMARY

Responses of 635 (67%) full time black undergraduates to the University Student Census were reported and discussed. Results indicated that blacks most strongly agreed that the University should provide a telephone crisis service (item 8), a drug counseling service (item 10), contraceptive and abortion information (item 7), Student Advisory Boards (item 4) and a legal counseling service (item 9). They also felt strongly that the University should recruit blacks and that the campus needed some good leadership (item 15). Blacks felt that they did not have ample opportunity to participate in policy making (item 23), and lacked channels to express complaints (item 25). They also felt that the faculty advisors and teaching faculty cared more about students than did administrators (items 20, 21 and 27). Additionally, of the students who were at the University the previous year most became well acquainted with at least one teacher with the median being two (item 30A). Blacks were generally not in favor of Saturday (item 16) or late afternoon and evening classes (item 27).

Blacks attended the University because it was conveniently located, or offered the kind of program they wanted. Only 5% indicated they mainly came because of their high school counselor. The problems of institutional racism in relation to high school counselors were discussed. Blacks felt studying and earning satisfactory grades were their most difficult adjustments to college. A majority of blacks (56%) felt that the racist practices or image of the University prevented more blacks from attending. Previous studies have indicated that blacks who see more racism at the University are more likely to be realistic, independent and adaptable to their environment. It was suggested that bringing more blacks to the campus is a partial but necessary step toward making the campus a more comfortable place for black students. Ways the University could eliminate racism were briefly discussed.

The numbers of blacks at predominantly white universities have increased in recent years. For instance, the percent of black freshmen at such universities has increased from 3% in 1969 (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970) to 4% in 1970 (Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz, 1971). Many would argue that such a change is trivial and not important, but the fact is that however small there does seem to be a trend toward increased black enrollment at such schools. In the midst of such a change, how are the black students at these institutions reacting? How do they feel about the school and its policies? Why did they enroll in the school? This study attempted to provide some data on these points.

Method

In the summer and fall of 1970 all full time undergraduates at the University of Maryland, College Park, completed an attitude and activities questionnaire called the University Student Census (USC). New freshmen completed the survey in the summer and upperclassmen in the fall. In the fall of 1970 there were 944 full time black undergraduates enrolled at College Park. This count was made by the Cultural Study Center and the Office of Admissions and Registration with the aid and involvement of black students (Brooks and Sedlacek, 1972). Of the 944 black undergraduates, 635 (67%) completed the USC. The sample was 53% male and 47% female and consisted of 40% freshmen, 27% sophomores, 20% juniors, and 12% seniors. Class data were not available for 1% of the black students. Black student responses to all USC items dealing with attitudes or opinions were reported as means or percentages.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows black student responses to 28 Likert type attitude items. Table 2 shows the percent responses to items dealing with adjustment, relationships to faculty, and educational planning for the state. Black most strongly

agreed that the University should provide a telephone crisis service (item 8), a drug counseling service (item 10), contraceptive and abortion information (item 7), Student Advisory Boards (item 4) and a legal counseling service (item 9). They also felt strongly that the University should actively recruit blacks (item 19) and that the campus needed some good leadership (item 15). Blacks felt that they did not have ample opportunity to participate in policy making (item 23), and lacked channels to express complaints (item 25). They also felt that faculty advisors and teaching faculty cared more about students than did administrators (items 20, 21 and 27). Additionally, of the students who were at the University the previous year most became well acquainted with at least one teacher with the median being two (item 30A). Blacks were generally not in favor of Saturday (item 16) or late afternoon and evening classes (item 27). This response can in part be explained by the fact that 50% of the black undergraduates held a part-time job and another 26% were looking for one as of the fall of 1970.

Particularly interesting are the black student responses to items 2, 39, 44 and 45 dealing with why they decided to attend Maryland and their problems in adjusting; why few blacks do attend the University and how the State can provide higher education for blacks and whites. Of the reasons given in item 39, blacks most often attended the University because it was conveniently located or offered the kind of program they wanted. That 26% marked "other" could indicate that reasons not mentioned in the item are important and worth further consideration. Only 5% of the students indicated that the main reason they attended Maryland was because a high school counselor or teacher suggested it. This is particularly important since counselors steering students away from Maryland, intentionally or unintentionally, has often been raised as a barrier to increased black enrollment at College Park (Desegregation Report, 1969) and serves as a clear example of institutional racism. Burrell and Rayder (1971) found that white counselors

were less effective with black clients and other studies (Barney and Hall, 1965; Green, 1966; Vontress, 1968) concluded that only with great understanding of the needs and backgrounds of blacks can whites be successful as counselors to blacks. Unfortunately a great deal of work and training of new and experienced counselors is needed before the situation is likely to change. It should also be added that black counselors, for a variety of reasons, are also likely to guide students toward institutions other than Maryland. A genuine concern for the racism the student may incur is one; other reasons may include the habit pattern that develops whereby in many direct and indirect ways a black student is steered toward a black institution, and conversely a white toward a white institution.

Blacks felt that studying and earning satisfactory grades were their most difficult adjustments to college (item 2). That black students at Maryland are particularly serious students has been noted previously (Van Arsdale, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1971).

In responding to why there are few blacks at College Park (item 44), a majority of black students (56%) felt that the racist practices or image of the University discouraged blacks from coming. In another study done at Maryland, DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks (1972) found that blacks who indicated that racism prevented blacks from attending the University were more apt to stay in school than were blacks who did not state racism as a deterrent. DiCesare *et al.* concluded that blacks who were more realistic about what they would encounter at Maryland were more likely to remain. Responses to question 45 indicated that most blacks were in favor of recruiting blacks to white schools and whites to black schools and improving the quality of predominantly black colleges as ways to improve higher education for blacks and whites in the State.

Thus the responses to the University Student Census give quite clear evidence on where black students stand on a number of issues and problems affecting their lives on and off campus. While blacks gave a wide range of opinions on these topics, their feelings about racism on the campus combined with their strong interest in recruiting blacks may at first seem inconsistent. Why would a black want other blacks to join him at a racist institution? The answer may be that the University tends to retain particularly courageous and adaptable blacks as DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks (1972) pointed out. Thus the more blacks that attend the University the more likely it is to become a more pleasant and natural place for blacks. Of course, more black students is only a partial answer to the racial problems facing the University. Providing services, facilities and an atmosphere conducive to blacks are just a few of the things that can be done by administration, faculty and students (black and white) *before* black students are forced out of school or into protest activities. The writers feel that the University must do a great deal more to eliminate racist practices among white students, faculty and administration. Courses on racism and education programs followed by strong action on racism are minimum steps in this direction.

The reader may be asking; why didn't they compare white and black responses to the questions? This would be possible and perhaps interesting. However, it was the purpose of the study to focus on how blacks feel about the University, not how they feel compared to whites. Whites need not, indeed should not always be the reference group for blacks. The writers feel the data speak for themselves and should provide much information to anyone concerned with higher education for blacks.

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TABLE 1

Black Student Responses to Likert Attitude Items*

	ITEM	MEAN	S.D.
3.	Students should have a vote in the hiring, retention and promotion of faculty in their academic department.	1.31	1.04
4.	Each academic department should establish a Student Advisory Board.	0.83	0.88
5.	The disruptions of last spring made me more involved in issues on the campus.	1.63	1.03
6.	Academic regulations should allow dropping courses throughout a semester without penalty.	1.24	1.20
7.	The University's Health Service should provide students with such services as information and prescriptions regarding contraception and abortion.	0.97	1.05
8.	The University should have an after-business-hours telephone service center for crises and general help to students.	0.69	0.86
9.	The University should provide a legal counseling service for students.	0.81	0.88
10.	The University should provide a drug counseling service for students.	0.74	0.88
11.	To enable concerned students and others to engage in political activity, the University should arrange its schedule to provide for no classes during the week before the November elections.	1.50	1.13
12.	Freshman and sophomore courses are not given enough attention by a number of academic departments.	1.56	0.97
13.	Graduate teaching, advisement and research occupy equal priority with undergraduate teaching involvement in most departments.	1.95	0.95
14.	The idea of the campus colloquy conducted last spring should be repeated regularly as a means of improving campus communication and problem solving.	1.51	1.03
15.	This campus needs some good leadership to encourage students, faculty, and administrators to jointly work at improving the University.	0.87	0.96

* (0=Strongly Agree; 4=Strongly Disagree)

TABLE 1

Black Student Responses to Likert Attitude Items*
(Continued)

	ITEM	MEAN	S.D.
16.	The University should schedule more classes on Saturdays.	2.51	1.29
17.	Most black students are friendly to whites.	1.56	1.04
18.	Most of my courses are stimulating and exciting.	2.03	1.03
19.	The University should actively recruit black students.	0.77	0.98
20.	Most faculty advisors here act like they really care about students.	1.82	1.00
21.	Most teaching faculty here act like they really care about students.	1.89	1.01
22.	Most administrators here act like they really care about students.	2.29	1.01
23.	University students have ample opportunity to participate in University policy making.	2.22	1.08
24.	The University should suspend students who disrupt the normal operation of the University.	2.23	1.13
25.	Channels for expressing student complaints are readily available.	2.35	1.04
26.	More use should be made of student and faculty referendums as providing bases for important administrative decision-making within the University.	1.14	0.91
27.	The University should schedule more classes in the late afternoon and evening hours.	2.13	1.14
28.	I believe that the introduction of coed housing on campus was an educationally sound idea.	1.22	1.01
29.	Most U. of Md. students are concerned about social issues on and off this campus.	1.60	1.09
30.	The U. of Md. is a better University than it was a year ago.	1.66	0.99

* (0=Strongly Agree; 4=Strongly Disagree)

TABLE 2

Percent Responses of Black Students to Categorical Items*

	ITEM	PERCENT RESPONSE
2.	As you expect or recall it, the hardest part of adjusting to college is:	
	A. Deciding whether (or how much) to get involved in campus dissent	3
	B. Suddenly being expected to be a critical and independent thinker	8
	C. Earning satisfactory grades	20
	D. Getting to meet and know other students--both sexes	6
	E. Meeting financial expenses	13
	F. Budgeting time	12
	G. Studying efficiently	21
	H. Selecting a major field of study and/or a career	11
	I. Other	6
	Total	101%
30A.	During the past year I became well acquainted with the following number of University instructors or teachers:	
	A. Was not at the University last year	40
	B. None	15
	C. One	14
	D. Two	12
	E. Three	7
	F. Four	5
	G. Five	2
	H. Six or more	2
	I. Other	2
	Total	99%
39.	What is the main reason you decided to attend the University of Maryland?	
	A. Relatively inexpensive	11
	B. Geographical location	20
	C. Offered kind of academic program I wanted	30
	D. Friends or relatives currently attend	3
	E. Friends or relatives previously attended	2
	F. Did not get accepted elsewhere	3
	G. H.S. counselor or teacher suggested the University	5
	H. Other	26
	Total	100%

* Percents do not always add to 100 due to rounding.

TABLE 2

Percent Responses of Black Students to Categorical Items*
(Continued)

	ITEM		PERCENT RESPONSE
44.	What is the main reason you feel there are few black students at the University of Maryland at College Park?		
	A. Blacks prefer to go to black colleges		15
	B. The University discourages them from coming because of its tough academic reputation		9
	C. The University's racist practices discourage them from coming		22
	D. The University's racist image discourages them		34
	E. Don't know		10
	F. Other		9
		Total	99%
45.	What do you feel is the best way for the state of Maryland to provide higher education for blacks and whites?		
	A. Improve the quality of the predominantly black colleges in the state to bring them up to the level of the University		28
	B. Require a certain % of white and black students at each college		12
	C. Let things happen naturally with no further program		7
	D. Work actively to draw whites to predominantly black colleges and blacks to predominantly white colleges		29
	E. Other		24
		Total	100%

* Percents do not always add to 100 due to rounding.